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77

# *The* Soul of America

By Julian Hawthorne

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***Each for all, and all for each: this  
is the Soul of America; and this is  
Socialism.***

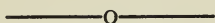
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*Dec 22/05*

# THE SOUL OF AMERICA

BY JULIAN HAWTHORNE



## THE SOUL OF AMERICA.



**B**EFORE trying to hatch out a pregnant suggestion to the effect that our surprising industrial supremacy may involve consequences in other directions which we little contemplated, I will premise a few things concerning what America means to me, what it originally was, and what it should naturally become. In so doing I will bear in mind that no topic is (to me certainly) nearly so seductive as Socialism; since it points to a marriage between the ideal and actual, the theoretic and the practical, and thus promises to every one who considers it the fulfilment of his most generous and reasonable hopes:—and is thus prone to lead one into interminable argument and exposition.

Other nations got their bodies first, and their souls later only, if at all. But this American Nation, so-called, reversed the common pro-

genes. Engl. 7 May 58 76abbs

America

*Pilgrims*  
cedure, and began with its soul. It is therefore unique, and it is the only nation normally constituted, if we concede that man is the type of society, or the state. The Pilgrims came here in obedience to a spiritual impulse, and against all considerations of a material sort; they did not care to be comfortable, but they were under a cogent necessity to be free. Disgorged from their cockle boats after a trying voyage, they stood knee-deep in snow, but happier than any other group of people then alive. They faced one another, man to man, and none desired advantage over the rest. They had the instinct of order, but no craving for dominion. Whether religion, politics or industry were uppermost in their thoughts, their interests and their aims were common. The situation was not only delightful in itself, but it had the stimulating charm of novelty. Nothing of the sort had happened within historical memory before.

America was then a Socialistic community in the full sense of the term; and tho Jameses,

Charleses and Georges might make remote trouble, that three thousand miles of salt water prevented them from getting taken too seriously. The undeveloped land was valueless, and therefore there could be as yet no danger that selfish persons would try to exploit it for pecuniary advantage. In a vague and remote way the people acknowledged formal fealty to a king over-seas, but it pre-occupied them no more than does fealty to God an imperfectly religious individual. They did not too much concern themselves about the future; they had no conception of the enormous size of the cantle of the globe's surface which they had got hold of, or of its incalculable potential wealth; their notions were modelled on the scope of tiny England, and they knew enough of human nature to surmise that they were not likely to be overcrowded by persons of like character and aims with themselves. In short they were a spontaneous and inevitable democracy, and thought to remain so. The soul was strong

and mighty in them, the flesh or material part scanty and feeble; and to such a community the principle of each for all and all for each was a matter of course. The selfish and inhuman side of their nature was—not eradicated of course, but as yet quiescent, because there were no temptations to draw it forth, on the one hand, and very entrancing inspirations to keep it down, on the other.

*Church  
Democratic* | It was as a church, primarily, that they regarded themselves; and the Christian church has been a democracy from the beginning, in that it makes all finite creatures equal before the infinite Creator. I do not mean to say, of course, that the administration of the church has been democratic, for it soon appeared that it had property of worldly value, and hogs and tyrants were early in its councils accordingly. But religion and democracy are in essence indissoluble. This religious democracy of our forefathers prompted them to accept social order and administration in harmony with it; and so far as industries were con-

cerned, the only possible provision was that each man should do his own work as far as he could, and should help or be helped by the others when necessary. They governed themselves, that is, they obeyed individually and collectively the dictates of justice, reason and decency; and they chose administrators to carry out jobs given to them in the common behoof. This, I say, was the original America; and I have always believed that, *mutatos mutandis*, to that we would (as well as ought to) come again, when all this rigmarol and diabolical disorder which we have in the long int<sup>er</sup>im brought upon ourselves has been declared unsatisfactory and been finally done away with. the soul of the true America is now, as it first was, Socialism—or I don't mind calling it Industrial Democracy, if you prefer—and tho during the past century or two we have grown upon our clean body all manner of goitures, carbuncles and cancers, leprosies and small-pox pustules, outcome of our spiritual sins of capitalism, oligarchies, trusts, bosses, civic in-

differences, and the like, that true and inalienable soul will at last avouch itself, and restore our primitive healthy complexion. The nation, being a soul, was bound like individual souls to pass thru hell on its way to regeneration ; but is even more certain than the individual soul to get there. For the individual soul is subject to free-will, but the national soul is under unconscious and therefore inevitable Divine guidance, and must come out right anyway.

You will not, however, understand me as adventuring any special prophecy as regards this visible and palatial place we call the United States ; for aught I can tell, that may be going straight to the devil. But the fact that America is a spiritual proposition implies that it may become incarnate anywhere ; in Turkey, Morocco, New Zealand, any old or young place, according as the mortal clay wherewith it is to be clad fits it. The only reason we have for expecting the embodiment shall be here rather than elsewhere is, that

this continent is not encumbered with any past steeped in traditions that have to be disowned and errors that must be rectified. We began on virgin soil, and practically in the present ; all our virtues and sins are of today, and therefore we have a better chance than others of developing the former and sloughing off the latter. Besides, all we have done or suffered has been the corollary of evolution—or, I would rather say, of normal progression ; for since you cannot evolve from the egg anything not originally or beforehand contained in it, evolution, strictly speaking, is a chimera ; the things brought into existence in this world are first created in the spiritual world or world of causes, and from that forced thru into this. But that is another story. All the same America is certain, here or elsewhere, to exist, and to oust and supplant everything else in the way of human society. It is significant that we are physically a conglomerate of all races and nations ; there is no sense in our calling ourselves a

*Immigration*  
*> Will*

nation, except as a superficial convenience ; other nations are based either on race or on a natural division or modification thereof ; but we are the great mongrel of time. There is no possibility of our ever showing a legitimate genealogical tree on the physical plane ; it is only spiritual, in the realm of mind, that we can look back clearly and steadily from this Now to the dawn of things. You cannot become a Hindu ; you lost your chance at least four thousand years ago ; but anybody can become an American at will, even in the severe technical sense ; and in the larger and more vital sense, he can and numberless persons have, become American all over the globe. I have met good Americans who never so much as heard of the western hemisphere ; but to be sure they were children under ten years of age. An American who calls himself a patriot is either a fool or a philosopher. And I am bound to admit that in this country the philosophers do not preponderate.

Well, then, I look for Socialism, or the spirit of America, to dominate and possess the earth ; and I see no good reason why this result should not be reached pretty soon. The thing will come whether we like it or not ; it is not a matter for us to pick and choose. If it were a matter of choice, I would not be nearly so much at ease about it. And yet, if the question were put to the vote in this country (together with the proviso that the voters should have the faculty of comprehending the proposition submitted to them) —Are you in favor of Socialism ?—I should expect a negative answer from the following persons or classes only :—First, from all thieves, with the possible exception of those legally catalogued as such, with photographs in the Rogues' Gallery actually or prospectively ; for these thieves are made such by social and industrial injustice, and if they understood that Socialism would eradicate abuses of this sort, they might be willing to come in :—but including three-fourths (let

us be charitable and say) of legislators and other administrative officials, because they are blind hogs for power and wealth and the worldly consideration they bring ; and a yet larger proportion of office-holders or employes, because having sold their souls for a livelihood, they fear to irritate those who have bought them ; and captains of industry, all but a handful. I wish I had space to tell you of a talk I recently had with one of these gentlemen, who exclaimed, among other things, with heroic gestures, "And do you suppose, for one moment, that if ever it did come to a question of force between labor and capital, that capital would fail to crush labor to the earth once and for all ?" Pretty near, but not quite all these gentry, I say, would vote in the negative with a will. Then, practically all men of considerable wealth, who mean to bequeath the same to their unhappy offspring ; and I cannot except artificial and dramatic freaks like Andrew Carnegie, in comparison with whose hat a sieve would be air tight, so

volubly does he discourse thru it; let him heap libraries and universities heaven high, he will never persuade me or anybody else that he will come to the honest point where he would be obliged to touch a friend for five. Next, old ladies, no sex barred, will be in the opposition, for they dislike rude behavior and loud noises and lack of consideration, respectability and reverence for tradition. Socialism will ultimately, no doubt, include these desiderata; but there is going to be an interval during which we may think the bottom is falling out of things and the roof falling in. Democracy, in its first accost, is doubtless repulsive. Next, I count as anti-Socialistic more than two-thirds of the parsons; the majority of those on our side would be identical with the individuals who are in danger of being read out of the church for heresy. The social and political record of the clergy is as a whole very disappointing to those who expected anything better of them. The church, as I said, is in the narrow straight of Socialism;

but the clergy contrive somehow to keep out of the church to a surprising degree, or at all events away from the marrow of it. Are there any others? Probably; but let these suffice; you perceive that we have left the bulk of the human race. If ninety-nine per cent. of the population own, as some statistician announces, one-fourth only of the national wealth, we may rest assured that our foes will never be in the majority. And some folks would be astonished to discover how many persons of seemingly the strictest respectability and quiet propriety are at heart rampant Socialists, (and even anarchists). I have picked up elderly physicians, of large practice, not to mention many esteemed scientific gentlemen, fathers of families, persons of gigs and broadcloth, who would, in confidence, utter sentiments which you and I would not venture to countenance fully. I would glance aside at the Turkey rugs on the floor and the Sargent pictures on the walls and think, "Can such things be?" But so it is.

And yet, as Wilshire says, if our brains instead of our bellies had to decide, it is likely that the Socialistic consummation might be indefinitely delayed. But when these valiant bellies of ours do take the field, if we do not behold an Armageddon, it will be only because the battle will be won before it has time to be fought. Meanwhile our friends the enemy have, as we all know, kindly prepared the way for us. Hanna and Morgan, with their little shrewd eyes on the jack-pot, have been wonderfully slipping the trump cards up—not their own sleeves, but—ours! The trusts have been organizing the affair of Socialism. Little do they know it, and still less can they help it. And not only have they done our job for us here, but they have been spending their precious money to lay its foundations abroad. The American invasion of Europe—what does it mean? This reminds me of my alleged theme.

Had Karl Marx and every extant Socialist been entrenched in these United States do you

suppose we would have received a visit from Prince Henry? No; it is these Johns the Baptist, Hannas, Morgans and Rockefellers who brought him. King Edward would follow him hot-foot, were he not detained at home by circumstances over which he has no control. It makes no difference that our Johns the Baptist aforesaid do not know what Messiah they herald; His shoe's latchet they are unworthy to unlace, but He is coming, and they have made straight his path in the wilderness. The poor little Prince arrived expecting to be introduced to a wealthy plutocracy, an oligarchy, a kingdom may be in the making; and he probably went home with the conviction that he had seen it; but he will be disillusioned ere long. American brains and money and machinery and produce have burst their boundaries here and under the shrewd guidance of the plutocrats have stepped appallingly across the seas; but with them has also gone, unseen, the mighty spirit of America, which is Socialism. That spirit

is already announcing itself in many ways. Under the guise of American girls it is marrying itself to European nobles ; in the shape of Schwab, it makes Monaco ridiculous ; as William Waldorf Astor it is rendering American snobbishness impossible by illustrating its degradation ; as Carnegie it is causing the British proletariat to look askance at the stately homes of England, built on the proletariat's neck ; as the every-day American tourist it is sowing the seeds of the open prairies in the bleached gardens of Old-World conservatism. American artists, horse-jockeys and pugilists, novelists and actors follow in the wake of the kings of American finance, of the railroad men, the oil and sugar men, and all the rest of the capitalistic and industrial pageant ; and no other wake would they have followed. It seems a sordid introduction, perhaps ; but in this age it is the normal one. The history of Americanism in the Old World is like that of vice as portrayed by the poet in the human bosom—seen too oft,

familiar with its face, it is first endured by those hide-bound conservatives, then pitied, now embraced. And when the embrace has made it incorporate with the embracer, its features will be transfigured, and it will declare itself divine. That is the document for which Hanna, Morgan & Co. are so innocently laying the pipes.

In other words, no Socialist propaganda could have been devised by Socialists themselves so effective and cogent as that which is being managed by those of our citizens to whom Socialism is most abhorrent. They create interest in America and sympathy with her by exhibiting her in foreign lands as the thing which they imagine her and intend her to be ; they make her power felt, and her style tolerated ; they create for her the respect which is based on fear. They are wholly preoccupied with the idea of getting rid of our industrial surplus, of making money, of owning things ; and they impress this preoccupation upon their foreign customers. But

all the while the silent masses of European folk are looking on, and taking notes. They are training themselves, largely in unconsciousness, of course, for the part they are to play. Ideas are secretly filtering into their brains, cravings and impulses into their hearts, apparently disconnected with the gaudy business that is going forward, yet of kindred generation. All of a sudden, the crisis\* (want in the midst of plenty: "hard times") takes place; our bellies go forth to battle. The individual captains of industry

\*The Trusts are the sign of economical abundance — of a capacity to produce much with least waste and less workers — and of higher prices. With our high standard of living, no worker should receive less than one thousand dollars a year.

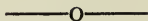
When workers produce for capital a dollar's worth, receiving back in wages ninety-eight cents, and then must pay middle-men a dollar and two cents for a dollar's worth, they can stand the twenty-fifth loss for a time, for even yet more is received than is most frugally needed. But a twenty-fifth of the remaining twenty-four twenty-fifths of wages are continually being absorbed thru lowered wages, or more frequent periods of forced idleness, the point of absolute need is constantly approaching with the increasing cost of living, and unless the Trusts cry "overproduction" and discharge workers with little or no surplus for a "rainy day," or allow strikes and lockouts to hasten the world wide process, there must come, finally, the inevitable situation of filled storehouses of the few and empty pockets of the many — "hardest times" — and a revolutionary crisis; the peaceable overturning of the competitive system to establish the Co-operative Commonwealth. (G.E.L.)

and the system which they represented, are unhorsed, submerged or otherwise annihilated; but the industries survive so far as they are genuine and have pith, and a new system dawns upon the night. And that it will dawn not here only, but all over the civilized world at the same time, we shall have to thank our self seeking little Johns the Baptist. They were blind instruments of a higher destiny; impotent pieces, as old Omar would say, of the game He plays. It is a lovely comedy, and it is needless to point out that the wider the theatre of it is, the less danger there will be of its acquiring a tragic complexion. The Americanization of Europe, begun by American capital, confirmed by American infiltrations of all other kinds, is a fact impending or accomplished. But Americanism is an idea, and that idea is Socialism. Sooner or later—not much later I think—it will drop its mask; possibly its real features may be recognized abroad even before we discover them ourselves, Those good old Pilgrim Fathers of

ours, who have of late so often had to despair of their offspring, will welcome the prodigals at last. We shall not externally resemble the Pilgrims, any more than the oak resembles the acorn ; but the essence will be the same. The fatted calf will be served up — and such a calf ! And deeply will our remote posterity ponder the problem how they, so enlightened and sane as they are, could ever have descended from a race of imbeciles and maniacs like us !

401  
1882

## POSTSCRIPT.



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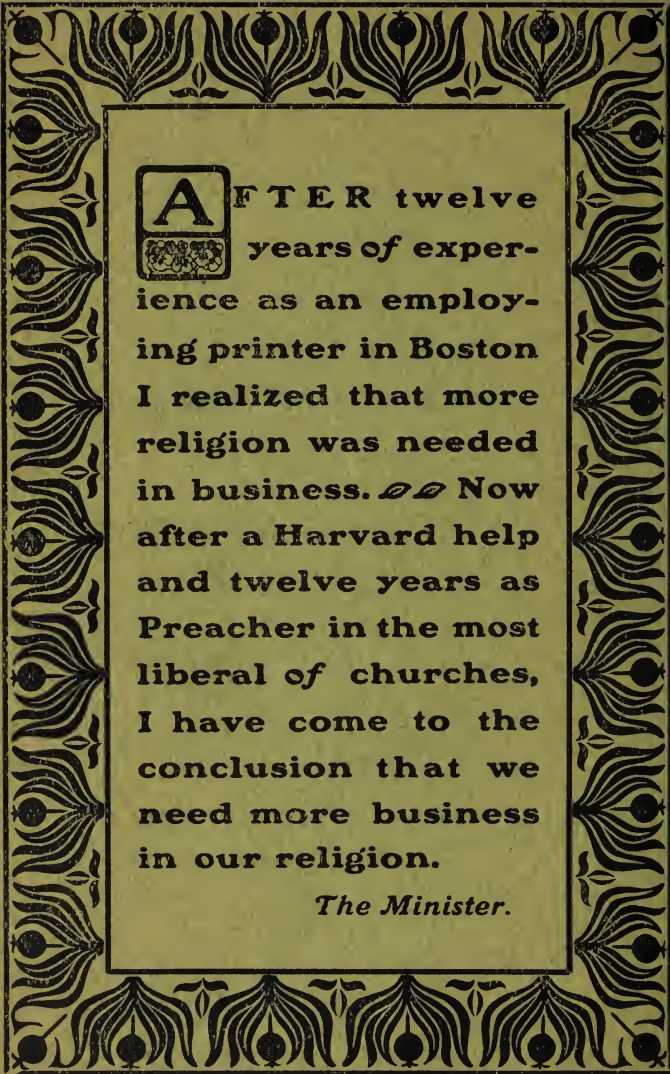
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